

## EXHIBIT A

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Ernesto Gonzalez <[ernesto13558@gmail.com](mailto:ernesto13558@gmail.com)>  
**Subject:** Re: Lionels letters  
**Date:** October 11, 2021 at 1:33:17 PM PDT  
**To:** "Scott J. Engelhard" <[engelhardlaw@comcast.net](mailto:engelhardlaw@comcast.net)>

## Dear Judge Coughenour

My name is Ernesto GonzalezTorres and I am Lionels younger brother, currently serving active duty in the Marine Corps stationed out of Yuma, Arizona.

Lionel has always been like a father figure to me from a young age. Even though he was only 4 years older than me he would take care of me and make sure I was good and not hungry. Lionel growing up was a very quite kid and sorta did his own thing. To be able to tell you a little bit more about Lionels and my relationship I'd have to go back a few years.

In 2010, I was only only 10 years old when my mom, my sister and I left to Mexico. My mom and dad separated and my mother wanted to start a life of her own in Mexico. Leaving behind my 2 older brothers Edgar and Lionel to stay with my Dad. A few months later I returned back to live them as well. My father was left to take care of us but because he was working all the time my older brothers would have to take care of me. My dad had lost his job so then we were forced to leave everything behind and move in with my aunts couching surfing from house to house. A few months go by and my father finds a job in Nebraska. Only lionel and I went with him. My oldest brother Edgar had stayed behind living with my aunts.

The year is 2012 I am 12 lionel is 16. My dad had a job that required him to travel so he would be gone for weeks to even months at a time leaving me and lionel by ourselves having to take care of ourselves and manage to still go to school. Lionel had a job at the local Mexican restaurant in Blair. He would work after school at the restaurant as a dish washer. He would make his own food there and bring it back home, that would be my dinners every night.

Fast forward to the next summer 2013. My dad had lost his job again and he wanted to move back to Washington but lionel did not want to go because he was finally at a school he felt that he fit into and was working at a job that he enjoyed so he decided to stay in Nebraska with my uncle. During this time my mother had been asking lionel to send them money for her and my little sister. Lionel ended up getting a construction job and still managed to go to school. His senior year they told him he was not going to be able to graduate if he continues to skip school and not be able to catch up on his credits. He would go into his classrooms and wouldn't eat and would stay late just so that he could catch up on all his work. He ended graduating on time. While all of that was happening my uncle that he was living with got arrested and was being deported, leaving lionel alone at the age of 17. With my uncle being deported it left lionel no choice but to move in with my dad , Edgar and I.

The year is 2014 I'm going into my freshman year of high school i finally have all my brothers together I feel like it's back to normal like it was when we lived together. My dad had a girlfriend that he would live with most of the time. The house that me and my brothers lived in was sorta like a field worker house a lot of people that had came from Mexico to work in the fields lived with us. At one point there was about 10 people in that house and it was only a 2 bedroom. Lionel and Edgar had gotten jobs with my dad in construction. A few months before lionel moved in with us from Nebraska my dad had been pulled over and arrested. Next thing we know my dad is being deported. They had sent him to the immigration facility since he was my legal guardian he had to give the authority of guardian to someone else so he had given it to lionel.

Lionel was an 18 year old having legal guardianship of a 14 year old while also sending my mom and little sister money to Mexico. So now it's only Lionel 18 Edgar 19 and me 14 living by ourselves with no parents and no family around for hours away. All the people that had been living in the run down house we were living in left. So it was only us 3 having to survive. My brothers would work in construction while I went to school. 2 years later in 2016 my oldest brother gets arrested. Now we're down to 2, Lionel 20 and myself 16.

I cannot imagine what it is like being so young having to take care of a teenager while also sending money to my mom and little sister. I myself am only 21 and do not think I would be able to take care of another person.

Lionel had always been a father figure to me from a young age but now, he's all that I had. Lionel wanted me to graduate high school and do something with my life. He supported me and made sure I had food, a roof over my head and anything I needed. I ended up graduating high school. I don't think I could've done it without him. I graduated high school and decided to enlist into the marine corps. Lionel supported me through it all he even flew out to see me on my graduation.

When I had found out Lionel got arrested I was in Africa. I felt like I could not do anything and was hopeless. Every time I would go on leave to go visit family back home it's like we were never apart we pick up right back where we were at. Mine and Lionel's bonding was watching Disney movies and playing video games. That's the type of relationship we had and that's the type of person he was. I feel that the reason we still watch those "kids" movies is because we didn't get to have that normal kids life. We had to grow and mature at a faster rate than everyone else. We didn't get to have our parents be there and take care of us until the age of 18 and send us off to college.

Now that I've talked about mine and Lionel's lives together I'll talk about him as a person. Lionel was always an introvert as a kid. Would always be inside playing video games and really into anime and cartoons, til this day Lionel into those things. On his free time he watches cartoons and plays video games. Lionel is one of those people that doesn't care what people think about him he likes to eat, wears what he wants and says what he wants. We would go visit family for the holidays and Lionel would wear Mickey mouse shirts while everyone else dresses up a bit. The way I like to describe him is like a big teddy bear. Looks big and intimidating but when you get to know him for who he is you soon realize that Lionel wouldn't even hurt a fly. He's one of the most lazy people I know he eats his food watches his shows, reads his comics, and goes to sleep.

I feel like with all the things that we had go through it added extra stress onto Lionel. He was already an introvert and having to take care of a teenager, mother and little sister doesn't make it any better. Growing up we were told to not show our emotions because it was a sign of weakness but I feel like Lionel had a lot more depression inside him than the rest of us. With everything going on Lionel was depressed and felt alone. All the people that were in his life were taken away from him somehow. My mother left in 2010 and has never come back since. My uncle his senior year got deported. My father got deported right after in 2014. Edgar got arrested in 2016. Me leaving in 2018 to go to the marines.

In conclusion I feel as if Lionel is a misunderstood depressed person that never had anyone there for him. From a young age he had to take care of other people while still having to uphold his own life.

Sent from my iPhone

Cindy Rivera

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Judge Coughenour, my name is Cindy Rivera. I am the Lionel's aunt. I am Married to Lionel's uncle, who is his mom's brother. Please consider my letter as all my words are sincere and truthful.

I have known Lionel since he was 10 years old. His nick name is colorcito (wich translates to color) he gained his nick name because you would only know what he is feeling if he blushes which means he turns a different color. It was the cutest nickname because he was so quiet, they had to guess his feeling by the color he was going to turn.

When I met Lionel and his siblings, I was impressed on how mature and easy going they can carry a conversation with adults. I am older than them and I can carry on a conversation, but definitely not as smooth as they can, they make jokes not studder and use words out of the everyday words we use. Right of the bat they impressed me. I clearly recall commenting to my husband how mature and good kids they were.

Shortly after I met Lionel his parents separated. His mom left to Mexico only taking his two younger siblings Ernesto and Yuridia. Ernesto didn't last long over there he soon came back. They struggled to keep together for a couple years they were couch surfing, and it would never just work out for them. Their dad went through a very rough spot in which Lionel Edgar and Neto had to take care of themselves. The only reason I know this is because when talking to them they would joke about the things they had to go through. Aside from the jokes you couldn't stop to think about their feelings and if they really were not feeling anything regarding everything that had happened and was happening.

In 2012 their dad had a job opportunity in Nebraska and they moved. I'm not sure why Edgar stayed and didn't go I believe he had the option to fit in his aunts house and was able to stay. This is the time I recall My husband starting to stress out with their situation the most and worry about them. I recall Lionel working at a Mexican restaurant and going to work right after school. I recall my husband telling Lionel to concentrate in school and Lionel jokingly saying, "Hey Neto gets to eat what he wants, and I do to and you know I like to eat." The reality of what was really going on or what they were feeling never came out the only time it came out was when my husband called him late one night and he was still working. Lionel then stating "I know I know I'll be in school in the morning. There's a lot of work I can't leave, and I need this." Most kids were out at the movies with their friends having a life. Lionel was always working and not for himself for his siblings and a lot of the times to help his dad. Although Lionel didn't say it in a sad or mad way, but he said it serious enough for it to break us.

When Lionel was 17 he moved back to Washington. We were excited to see them together I recall us having a bar-b-que and me thinking everything is perfect now. The boys had to mature but its their time they still have time to hang out with friends go out and enjoy.

Lionel Edgar and his dad worked in construction. I couldn't believe a senior was working in construction! We didn't think Lionel would graduate. I mean how could he? Nothing was stable and he was working at a restaurant and at times get out at 2-3 am and be at school the next morning and now working in construction. But aside from everything Lionel graduated!

A few months later his dad got deported as if that wasn't enough losing his dad. Ernesto was a minor and needed a guardian. I recall Lionel being firm and stating he can take care of "Neto." We believed he could I mean he was already doing so. When he was questioned with the paperwork Lionel was firm and had an attitude that no matter what he would try or fight for it. I remember Ernesto feeling comfort with that. All they wanted was to stay together. Lionel did it and I was hopeful he would. Ernesto in high school was in basketball and Lionel's priority was to keep him in basketball and not have him need a thing to be as normal as possible. While all of this was happening Lionel was also helping his mom and his sister in Mexico for who knows how long that had been going on.

Edgar their older brother got arrested in 2018. This was the hardest hit for Lionel. When Ernesto wanted to join the Marines Lionel was his biggest supporter. I truly believe Ernesto having Lionels support was what mattered the most to him.

Lionel has played a huge role in his sisters life. A couple years ago, their mom stated she wasn't sending their sister to school because she claims "teachers don't know nothing." She was asked what are is she going to do when she gets older she needs education and their mom responded with, "Well oh well she'll have to figure it out on her own." Sir I had never heard them cry until this day. Those words hurt them.

After this they knew their sister needed to come and get out of that. Lionel has been up to date with his sister's schoolwork who she talks to and what she wears. His sister is definitely not used to this life style and rules, but Lionel wont quit on her. He is firm he doesn't believe even her going back to that environment for on her vacation is safe. Lionel is firm with her, but when he sees her it's a different Lionel its huggable/dad figure Lionel. He makes sure where she is sleeping is comfortable enough and she feels good it's a Lionel we hadn't seen.

Lionel has always liked cartoons and till this day he likes cartoons. I believe it's because he didn't have a childhood. Although he didn't have a childhood you would never guess that because of the way he carries himself. Lionel is proper and would never cause any kind of drama or as a matter of fact you can't ever imagine him mad, much less hurting anything object much less people. You see therefore this is such a nightmare and difficult to believe, almost hard to explain because of how out of content this is for his character.

Sir I hope you have read or heard about Lionel he really is worth it. Lionel doesn't drink, smoke nor have addictions. Lionel is very calm, funny and very family oriented. Lionel in fact is a lot of things, he fears any type of altercations, and addictions. Just last month we went to go visit him and took him to the casino we taught him how to play. Even though he didn't want to play; we taught him to play in the penny machines. (my favorite) It was nice to see him out, and more so see him try something new.

Recently Lionel has been going to the counselor I immediately noticed a huge difference! The first two conversations we had after his first visit, I cried after we hung up. He doesn't know this I didn't want him to know this or how I felt because I was scared what if he knew how emotional it was getting me what if he held himself back in talking about feeling in general. I'm not sure on the reason why I cried it was beautiful to hear him talk about his feelings.

Sir I hope you get to know Lionel he really is different. He has kept this family together as much as possible and has and is taking care of them. He wishes different for them at such a young age has already made a huge difference in his sibling's life.